

Granite Countertops Care & Maintenance Guide

One of the biggest fears people may have about natural stone is the maintenance it requires. The diamond-like hardness of granite makes it virtually impervious to abrasions, stains and heat. (It's important to note that granite won't stand temperature stress such as fireplaces where the stone expands and contracts in very short period of time. The seams, however, will prevent cracks.)

You'll find caring for your natural stone is easy. Warm water, mild dishwashing liquid, and soft clean cloth are generally all that's needed to maintain your granite countertop surface. The best care you can give your natural stone is preventive care. By following a few suggestions, your countertops will last a lifetime while maintaining a brand-new appearance.

Basic Cleaning and Maintenance

Avoid using cleaning products with any kind of acid or abrasive; they may cause de-colorations or scratches.

Do not stand , kneel down on or sit on your countertops, as they could crack or break.

Do not place hot pans or other objects directly on your countertops. This may cause discoloration (mainly in dark granites) and/or cracking. Always use a protective barrier between any hot object and granite such as trivet or mat.

Granite countertops are surprisingly resilient to stains like citric acid, coffee tea, alcohol, or wine, and virtually impossible to scratch. However, as a preventive measure, wipe up any spills on the countertops within a reasonable amount of time and do not let liquid sit on the countertop overnight. It is important to note that granite is most prone to staining by oil. Be careful not to place any pots or frying pans with oil traces on the bottom on the countertop surface. Blot oil and

acid spills as soon as they happen, and clean with mild soap and warm water to avoid any harm to your countertops.

If the oil stains remain, there is a special cleaning procedure for the removal of deep-seated, time-set dirt and grime. A general poultice with baby or baking soda and water is the best remedy. First, moisten the surface of the granite with the same liquid that made the paste. Then apply the poultice paste to the granite surface about ½" thick. Tape plastic sheeting over the poultice area, and allow it to sit for 48 hours. Remove the poultice with a spatula, rinse the cleansed area with clean water, wipe off excess water, and allow the surface to dry.

Granite tends to attract soap scum. Rinse with hot clean water on a regular basis and use a paper towel to dry. Another way to remove lime build up , soap scum, stains or dried spills, is to use a straight razor blade in a gentle scraping motion. Do not use lime removal products or cleaning products that contain ammonia, as this will affect the seal on the stone.

For stubborn stains you can also use dry steel wool grade 00, or a no-scratch Scotch Brite pad to try to remove them.

Avoiding Chips

Chips in granite are not a common occurrence. When they do happen, chips are most often caused by banging something into the edge of the countertop. Take care when you handle heavy pots and pans around your granite profiles as these are the most prone to cause chipping. If a chip does occur and you find the piece that chipped out, hold on to it. Most of the time it can be epoxied back into place.

Sealing

Perform the paper towel test to determine whether your granite needs to be sealed. Some types of granite never need sealing and adding sealer to these types will just make a mess. Soak a paper towel (without printing) or a white cotton towel. Place the water-soaked towel on the counter and wait about 5 minutes. Is the area under the paper towel dark from the water soaking into the granite? If it is discolored, your granite needs to be sealed to resist water-based spills and stains.

Perform the solvent test to see if an oil stain will enter the granite. Simply dab some paint thinner on the countertop and leave for 5-10 minutes. If, after you remove it, it doesn't darken the stone, neither will an oily staining agent such as cooking oil. If it does go dark, you should use a solvent-based sealer to protect against oil-based stains.

In short, if the granite goes dark with either water or paint thinner, then seal. If there is no color change after testing with these two liquids, you do not really need a sealer on your granite countertop.